



Menemsha, 1942

WAG-274 ; AG-39

A bight in Gay Head, Martha's Vineyard, off the coast of Massachusetts.

Builder:

Length: 261'

Beam: 43' 6"

Draft: 20' 3"

Displacement: 2,580 tons

Cost: \$

Commissioned:

Decommissioned:

Disposition:

Machinery:

Performance & Endurance:

Max:

Cruising:

Complement:

Armament:

Electronics:

History:

Menemsha (AG-39) was built as *Lake Orange* by the McDougall-Duluth Company of Duluth, Minnesota in 1918. She was purchased as *John Gehm* by the Maritime Commission from her owners, Bison Steamship Corporation of Buffalo, New York, in 1941. She was acquired by the Navy on 19 September 1941, renamed *Menemsha* and classified AG-39 on 15 October 1941. She was then converted from a lake cargo hauler to a weather patrol ship by the Maryland Drydock Company of Baltimore, Maryland and was commissioned under loan to the U.S. Coast Guard on 20 January 1942.

Assigned to duty with the North Atlantic Weather Patrol, *Menemsha* patrolled various at-sea weather stations out of Boston and Argentia, Newfoundland. Averaging about 3 weeks a patrol, she braved the perils of the storm-tossed Atlantic and the menace of German U-boats to gather valuable weather data from her isolated positions. In addition, *Menemsha* maintained a constant alert for the enemy undersea raiders as well as for survivors from torpedoed ships. While patrolling south of Newfoundland 20 August 1942, she rescued the only five survivors from the British merchant ship *Arletta*, torpedoed by *U-458* on 4 August while a straggler from convoy ON-115. *Menemsha* returned the survivors to Boston 25 August.

Almost one year later *Menemsha*, on a weather patrol, sighted a German submarine. As she steamed about midway between the Virginia Capes and the Azores on the moonlit night of 11 August 1943, her lookout spotted a surfaced sub, *U-760*, about 6,000 yards off her starboard bow. She closed for attack and began shelling the U-boat with 4-inch gunfire. During the next half hour she chased the enemy which responded with "incoherent recognition signals" rather than with torpedoes or return fire. The determined weather patrol ship fired 20 rounds, one of which struck close aboard the fleeing sub's conning tower. *Menemsha* broke off attack after suspecting the presence of other enemy U-boats in the area. She rendezvoused with a hunter-killer group, headed by USS *Croatan* (CVE-25), at noon the 12th; however, patrolling aircraft and escorting destroyers failed to flush *U-760* who interned herself on the Spanish coast 8 September. The Navy transferred *Menemsha* to the Coast Guard 22 October 1943 and she was commissioned as USCGC *Menemsha* (WAG-274). Her name was struck from the Navy list 30 October 1943. She was rebuilt at the Coast Guard Yard as a gunnery training ship and was then assigned to VCNO and was stationed at Norfolk, Virginia and was employed for armed-guard training.

She was decommissioned on 24 September 1945 and was sold in 1947.

Sources:

Cutter History File. USCG Historian's Office, USCG HQ, Washington, D.C.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Washington, DC: USGPO.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft of World War II*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982.

Robert Scheina. *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1990.

